

Oroville Relicensing Land Use Studies:

An unofficial examination of why we need the baseline data we are proposing to gather

2-19-02

SP-L1 Land Use

FERC requires an assessment of existing land uses. In relicensing a hydroelectric project, FERC needs to know what the land uses are within and adjacent to the project boundary. It needs this information so that it can determine how and if changes in project facilities and operations would impact, or would be impacted by, land uses. Examples of why this information could be necessary (although we don't know yet for the Oroville Project) include:

- Assessing if proposed mitigation measures that would impact lands would be compatible or appropriate for existing and planned future land uses at the project and adjacent to it (e.g., proposing a wildlife mitigation area next to an off-project area slated for a subdivision)
- Determining the current and/or planned future land use of lands that may be proposed for trade, sale or purchase
- Determining how and if potential changes in project facilities or operations would impact use (e.g., proposing a storage yard in an area used by recreationists to access the reservoir)
- Determining if existing and proposed future land uses outside of the project boundary are, or would be, compatible with project operations (eg. proposing a new project access road within the project boundary next to an area where the local jurisdiction plans to develop a park).

SP-L2 Land Management

In order to identify potential conflicts between a proposed action and the objectives and land management activities of Federal, regional, State and local land use agencies, FERC wants to know what the plans, policies and management direction of those agencies are and how the lands are managed. To that end, we need to know what the plans, policies and management directions of the various entities that manage land in the project area are. We also need to know how the lands are actually being managed.

An example might be an area that in a land management plan has been designated for timber harvest, but has yet to be harvested. The current actual land use may be wildlife habitat or recreation, but the management direction of the land is timber production.

SP-L3 Comprehensive Plan Consistency

FERC has a list of comprehensive plans that must be consulted to determine if potential actions related to relicensing are consistent with the plans. In addition, FERC wants to get information related to other comprehensive plans that are not on the FERC list but are relevant to the project. In order to accomplish this requirement, we must obtain all related comprehensive plans and understand enough about them to determine if potential actions related to relicensing would be or not be consistent with the plans.

At first glance this appears to be the same as SP-L2, but it actually is different. SP-L2 will actually discuss how lands near the project are managed and used. SP-L3 discloses whether potential actions would be consistent or not with applicable comprehensive plans. These comprehensive plans may be land use plans, or may be other comprehensive plans such as recreation plans or fisheries management plans.

SP-L4 Aesthetics

FERC has identified aesthetic resources as a resource type that needs to be evaluated as part of relicensing. FERC is primarily interested in a description of the aesthetic character of the existing lands and waters so that it can be determined if proposed changes to project facilities and operations (which includes mitigation measures) would impact the aesthetic character of the project. In addition, FERC requires a description of the effectiveness of mitigation measures for aesthetic resources proposed by the applicant, including architectural design, landscaping, and other reasonable treatment proposals to preserve and enhance aesthetic and related resources.

SP-L5 Fuel Load

FERC does not specifically require studies related to fuel load. The reasons that a fuel load study is being proposed to be included with other relicensing studies is that at the Oroville project, fire could impact project a number of project resources. In addition, the public identified fuel loading as an issue of concern.